

VLR - 6/14/00
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FINAL
ARCHIVES

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box a by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply a the property being documented, enter "N/A" ~~for~~ "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, a complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Peabody Building of the Peabody-Williams School

other names/site number DHR File No. 123-5019

2. Location

street & number Jones Street not for publication _____
city or town Petersburg vicinity X
state Virginia code VA county _____ code 730 Zip 23803

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards ~~for~~ registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide X locally. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register

_____ See continuation sheet

_____ determined eligible for the

National Register

_____ See continuation sheet

_____ determined not eligible ~~for~~ the National Register

_____ removed from the National Register

_____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

 X building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Education Sub: School

[illegible]**Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)**Cat: Vacant Sub: Not In Use[illegible]

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals/Vernacular Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
roof Metal
walls Brick
other Wood

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Education
Ethnic Heritage/Black
Architecture

Period of Significance _1920-1950_____

Significant Dates _1920_____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
_N/A_____

Cultural Affiliation _N/A_____

Architect/Builder _Charles M. Robinson_____

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- ___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
___ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- _X_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _____

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 18 286440 4122120 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Ashley M. Neville

Organization: Gray & Pape, Inc. date March 17, 2000

street & number: 1705 East Main Street telephone 804-644-0656

city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23223

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Petersburg, c/o David Canada, City Manager, City Hall-Room 201

street & number 135 N. Union Street telephone 804-733-2301

city or town Petersburg state Va zip code 23803

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 7 Page 1

Summary Description

The Peabody Building of the Peabody-Williams School was built in 1920 as the public high school for African American students in Petersburg, Virginia. Petersburg was historically one of the important manufacturing, commercial, and transportation centers in Virginia and from its earliest times had a large population of African American residents – both free and slave. The first several decades of the twentieth century were a period of growth for the city that was still recovering from its role during the last stages of the Civil War. Petersburg was also endeavoring to provide an education for the children of the city in a segregated setting typical of other communities in Virginia and the South. The early twentieth century saw the construction of a number of schools in Petersburg for both black and white students and the Peabody Building was a part of that burst of construction of educational facilities. The architect for the Peabody Building was Charles M. Robinson, a prolific architect of educational buildings across the state. Peabody was one of several schools in Petersburg designed by Robinson.

The Peabody Building, a two-story, red brick school, was originally part of an educational complex of buildings that included a semi-attached junior high school building (the Williams Building). Although the original junior high building is no longer extant, the Peabody Building continues to be part of a complex of school buildings. The present Peabody Junior High School is located to its south and east and the vacant Giles B. Cooke Elementary School (originally known as the Federal Street School) is situated east of Peabody. These three buildings are located just off Halifax Street on a large tract of land in a residential area of Petersburg.

Architectural Description

The Peabody Building faces south towards Jones Street and is situated on the western edge of a large tract of land where the present-day Peabody Junior High School and the Federal Street School (now vacant) are also located. There is a small lawn immediately in front of the Peabody Building with a large tree located at the northwest corner. The remainder of the area around the school is paved for parking and playground use with a tall chain-link fence surrounding the building and paved areas. The Peabody Junior High School is located immediately to the south and east of the Peabody Building.

The Peabody Building was built in 1920 as one of a pair of buildings. Peabody housed the high school while its twin, the Williams Building, served as the junior high school for African American

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 7 Page 2

students. The Williams Building stood to the south of the Peabody Building and except for the rear auditorium wing of Peabody, the buildings were identical. A covered way and arch connected the two buildings. Fire destroyed the Williams Building in 1967.

The Peabody Building stands two stories on a raised basement and is constructed of red brick laid in five-course American bond. The projecting center, entry bay flanked by a range of windows on each level is typical of many schools built during this period. A brownstone watertable defines the basement level and a heavy, molded, three-part wooden cornice with full entablature crowns the building. Two massive brick chimneys pierce the shallow hipped roof in the center of the building. Two additional chimneys with corbelled caps are located at the rear of the main block. A metal fire escape has been added to the north end of the classroom section with a door at the second floor level.

The T-shaped building is essentially two sections, all built at the same time, with the classrooms in the front section and the large, rectangular-plan auditorium attached to the rear. The building measures 75 feet on its main (west) façade and extends 150 feet to the east. The main façade and entry is located at the top of the T.

The entry is housed in the projecting fifteen-foot-wide center bay. Reached by concrete steps, the double-leaf wooden doors are flanked by six-light sidelights over a single wooden panel. A tall transom over the doors and sidelights provides light to the interior. A metal-sheathed, gable-roof canopy with decorative end finials is suspended over the door by heavy chains. A tripartite window pierces the second floor of the projecting bay. It consists of a nine-over-nine-light center window flanked by narrow six-over-six-light (two per course) windows.

Ranks of wooden windows, typical of schools built during this period, provide ample light into each classroom. The windows on the second and third floors consist of five, nine-over-nine-light double-hung sash with cast-stone molded sills. These windows are located across the façade and on the sides of the T-shaped section but not on the ends of the front section of the building. The basement level was fully articulated with windows along the front, sides, and ends but all have been enclosed with brick. The watertable forms the top of the basement windows.

The auditorium is a long, rectangular block that measures 75 feet by 60 feet. Set lower than the classroom block at ground level, the auditorium is expressed on the exterior as a single story. The roof is a false-mansard type with the upper slope hidden from view and standing-seam metal covering the lower slope. Two large metal ventilators are set to the rear of the roof. The auditorium block has

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 7 Page 3

the same heavy, molded cornice as the classroom block but without the full entablature. Three sets of centrally placed, tall, double windows provide light into the auditorium. Like the windows of the classroom section, these are nine-over-nine-light double-hung sash windows but here a six-light transom tops each window. Direct exterior access into the auditorium was provided by entries located on either side of the windows and reached by concrete steps. Two of the original six-panel double-leaf doors survive. Double four-fixed-pane transoms set at the same level as the window transoms are located over each door. A single nine-over-nine-light window on each side of the auditorium provides light into the backstage area.

Two brick pilasters flank the southwest door of the auditorium and are a surviving remnant of the covered way that connected the Peabody and Williams buildings. The outline of the gable roof of the connection is also visible on the side of the auditorium. The second remnant element of the now-missing Williams Building on the Peabody Building is a single brick pier located at the southwest corner of the main block and capped by the sandstone water table. It helped to support a twenty-five foot long arch that originally spanned the front of the opening between the two buildings.

A one-story, rectangular-plan block was added to the rear of the auditorium in 1948 to house the heating plant. Also built of brick, its most notable features are the two massive brick chimneys located at the rear of the auditorium. This addition has a flat roof.

The interior of the Peabody Building features a fifteen-foot wide center passage flanked by two classrooms on each side on the first and second floors. The basement housed service rooms. Both the front and rear entrances access a landing with stairs leading up to the main floor passage or down into the basement. The stairs feature square, paneled newels, molded handrail, and rectangular balusters, three per tread. In several places, a solid wooden panel has replaced the balusters. The stairs to the second floor rise from the rear of the passage. A door, located on the landing of the stairs to the second floor, originally provided access to the auditorium balcony but is now sealed. The walls throughout the building are plastered with deep baseboards and there is picture molding on the hallway and classroom walls at the height of the top of the door transoms. The ceiling in the main public areas, the passage, and auditorium are plastered with thin strips of wood forming a rectangular block pattern suggesting a paneled or coffered ceiling. Hardwood floors are found throughout the school.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 7 Page 4

The principal's office is located on the second floor at the head of the center passage. A paneled and frosted glass partition wall separated the office from the passage. The interior of this space has been further divided into two rooms.

There are four classrooms on each of the two main floors; however, bathrooms now occupy the southeast room on the first floor. Entry to the classrooms is gained through large doorways topped with six-light transoms and surrounded by asymmetrical trim and paneled reveals. The transoms on the second floor have been covered. Each classroom was well supplied with natural light with a rank of five windows across one wall. The window sills are located at the same level as the chalk trough. Green chalkboards are found on at least two walls with a nicely molded cornice above and chalk trough below. The fourth wall is devoted to closets and storage cabinets. The closet wall features a combination of paneled wooden sliding doors and double- or single-leaf doors that swing open. Storage cabinets, centrally placed on the closet wall, are substituted for some of the closet space in each of the first-floor classrooms. The ceilings in the classrooms are plain without the pattern found in the hallway and auditorium

The auditorium, located to the rear of the classroom block, is a large rectangular open area with a raised stage at the western end. A molded arch frames the proscenium and the two flanking doors provide backstage access. A balcony once occupied the western end of this room but was probably removed when the auditorium was converted into a gymnasium about 1950. The ghost of the balcony and the now-sealed second-floor doorway are visible on the western wall. All the original seating has been removed and the lighting reflects its most recent use as a gym.

The design for the Peabody-Williams School represents an unusual pairing of a popular plan for schools that was used statewide for many years. During the early years of standardized school design, a popular choice was a building of two or two-and-a-half stories, three or five bays wide, with little exterior ornamentation. Classrooms, sometimes as few as eight, flanked a center corridor that ran front to rear. This represented an improvement from buildings that were smaller, poorly designed, or not originally intended for use as a school. Architect Charles M. Robinson, one of the most important Virginia architects of this period and most noted for his designs of educational buildings, executed the design for the individual buildings of the Peabody-Williams School. The Peabody Building is one of six Robinson-designed buildings in Petersburg, four of which are public schools. It remains unclear if Robinson made the decision to pair the two buildings and visually link them or if that design decision was made locally. The Peabody Building represents a classic design for a school - one that was used by many localities across the state.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 8 Page 5

DW# 123-5019

Summary Statement of Significance

The Peabody Building of the Peabody-Williams School opened in 1920 as the public high school for African American students in the City of Petersburg. The school was built during the period of segregated school systems for black and white students that was pervasive throughout Virginia and the South. The Peabody Building housed the high school while its twin, the Williams Building (destroyed by fire in 1967), was the junior high school. This was the third building in Petersburg to house a high school for African American students but the first built exclusively as a high school. It was built during a period of growth in public school construction in both Petersburg and the state. It served as the high school for African American students until 1950 when a new high school was constructed. An elementary school then occupied the Peabody Building until the 1960s. Today, the Peabody Building, is the oldest extant school in the City of Petersburg that was built for the education of African American children and the first built specifically as a high school for these students.

The Peabody Building of the Peabody-Williams School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A for reflecting a broad pattern of history in the areas of education and ethnic heritage for African Americans. It is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of architecture for its association with a master, architect Charles M. Robinson, and because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. For thirty years, it served as the high school for black students in a segregated educational system in the City of Petersburg. The Peabody Building provided a setting for the continued education of African Americans that prepared them for an ever-changing future. It is also the oldest surviving school building in Petersburg for African Americans associated with the segregation period in which a dual school system for black and white children was enforced. In addition, the Peabody Building represents the work of Charles M. Robinson, an architect who is noted for his designs of educational buildings statewide. He is one of the most important Virginia architects of this period and his approach to school design and campus master planning continues to exert an influence today. The Peabody Building exemplifies a traditional design used for school buildings for many years. Although in need of repair, the Peabody Building retains all of its original architectural features that enables it to convey its significance as a school.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 8 Page 6

Narrative Statement of Significance

Petersburg, located at the falls of the Appomattox River, developed as a commercial, industrial, and transportation center of the region. By the eve of the Civil War, it was second in size only to Richmond in the state and was the seventh largest city in the South. African Americans have played a substantial role in the history of Petersburg from its earliest period. By 1800, fifty percent of Petersburg's population was African American and that percentage held through 1860.¹ A large portion of Petersburg's African American population was free. By 1810, there were over a thousand free blacks in Petersburg almost a third of the town's free population. By 1860, that number had increased to 3,000 which was the largest free black community of any city in Virginia.²

Education in Petersburg before the Civil War consisted of private tutors and private schools and academies for the wealthy and free schools for the poor whites. Anderson Seminary, made possible by a bequest of a city merchant, was Petersburg's most important free school of the antebellum period. Several other schools were established for white children in Petersburg. The Petersburg Benevolent Mechanic Association established a day school for children and apprentices of its members as well as a night school. The Petersburg Classical Institute, established in 1838, was sponsored by Presbyterian laymen. There was a certain stigma, however, in attending a free school and the local paper, the *Petersburg Intelligencer*, warned against the dangers of a public system of education.³

Education for African Americans, both free and slave, was almost non-existent and often clandestine. Those free blacks that were able sent their children to schools in the North and in southern urban areas, like Petersburg, churches and benevolent societies established schools. In 1820, a Boston minister organized a day school. After 1831, however, the teaching of African Americans, both free and slave, was prohibited. Some secret schools continued to operate.⁴ Robert Mayo and Joseph Gallee, both free blacks, operated schools in Petersburg prior to the Civil War.⁵

In the post-Civil War period, northern missionary societies organized and operated schools for African Americans in Petersburg. Both the Baptist and Episcopal churches operated missionary schools. By the fall of 1865, there were about thirteen day schools and two night schools for African Americans.⁶ The Freedman's Bureau operated schools for African Americans throughout the state that were partially paid for by student tuition payments. Originally most teachers had been northern whites but by the early 1880s a larger proportion of the teachers were black.⁷ Schools for black

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 8 Page 7

children were established in Pocahontas, Blandford, Poplar Grove, Market and Oak streets, Poplar Lawn and in Gillfield, First African Baptist, and Third Baptist churches.⁸

The new 1869 Virginia constitution provided for a segregated system of public education for blacks and whites. Petersburg's school system was established in 1868 two years before the statewide system. The Petersburg system initially had eight elementary grades and four years of high school but dropped to an eleven-year schedule to conform to the state schedule. The 1868-69 school year saw the enrollment of 430 white students with 12 teachers in three elementary schools and one high school. Four elementary schools were established for African Americans in rented quarters, including one church, for 575 African American pupils with 12 teachers. A high school for African Americans was not thought necessary and none was established initially.⁹

During the post-Civil War period, Petersburg's Radical-controlled government produced a number of heretofore-unknown benefits for African Americans living in the city. Jobs, some health care, and education opportunities were provided. Between 1872 and 1890, six African Americans served on the School Board.¹⁰ The Petersburg Common Council appropriated funds to operate the schools for African American students supplemented by money from the Freedman's Bureau and the Peabody Fund. The Petersburg school system was considered the best in the state, had one of the longest school years, and paid its male teachers the highest salaries in the state. The African American community took full advantage of these new educational opportunities and by 1900 illiteracy had fallen greatly among both heads of households and children.¹¹

The first high school for African American students in the city was organized from the advanced classes of the elementary schools in January 1870. It was housed in the Old African Church on Harrison Street that had been enlarged into a two-story building to house the high school in addition to the elementary school already located in the building. Fifty students and four teachers constituted this first high school with Major Giles B. Cooke as the principal. A graduate of West Point and former officer in the Confederate Army, Cooke became an Episcopal minister and a leader in African American education after the war. The Federal Street Elementary School later was renamed for him. A classical course of study that included mathematics, algebra, grammar, spelling, English, geography, history, writing and bookkeeping was offered to the high school students. Cooke resigned in 1871 and was succeeded by one of the teachers, Junius Leigh. During Leigh's term Latin, French, music, and vocal culture were added to the curriculum.¹²

By 1873, the Board of Education made plans to erect a new school to replace the one held in the Old African Church and purchased a lot on the corner of Harrison and Fillmore streets. With funds from

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 8 Page 8

the city, the Peabody Fund, and other sources, a new school was constructed at a cost of \$18,270.¹³ The school, which opened with the 1874 term, was a twelve-room brick building and housed both the high school and an elementary school. It was named the Peabody School to honor the Massachusetts philanthropist, George Peabody who had established the Peabody Fund that helped fund many southern schools including this one.

The high school occupied one room of the building with the elementary school in the remainder. Enrollment figures for the 1875-76 term show seventeen high school students and 411 elementary students.¹⁴ The classical course of study continued to be emphasized and, like all public schools in the state during this period, was completed in three years. In 1877, Duncan Brown became the principal of the Peabody School. A Petersburg native, Brown served in that capacity until 1881. He later became Superintendent of the Petersburg Public Schools.

Up to this time, the principals and teachers in schools for African American students had been white. African Americans had sought since 1869 to have African American teachers and principals in African American schools but it was not until 1882 that this was accomplished. Alfred Pryor was appointed the first African American principal of the Peabody School for the 1882-1883 term. In addition, the Superintendent of Schools recommended that thirteen African American teachers be employed. After the middle of the 1882-1883 term, all teachers in African American schools were black.¹⁵ William H. Hamlin succeeded Pryor as principal of Peabody in 1884. Hamlin, a Petersburg native, had been educated in the city's schools and was a graduate of the Peabody School and Hampton Institute. Under his administration, the high school continued its classical course of instruction and increased its enrollment from twenty-five students in 1883 to forty-three in 1886.¹⁶

The next principal of Peabody was James E. Shields, also a native of Petersburg. Shields served as principal from 1889 to his retirement in 1935. During his long tenure, he oversaw the development of Peabody School and its move to new, larger, and separate quarters on Jones Street. But in 1889, the high school, fifty students strong, continued to occupy one room of the Peabody School. At that time, the principal not only served as principal of the entire school (high school and elementary levels) but taught high school classes as well.

Forty years after the construction of the twelve-room Peabody School, the high school and elementary grades continued to be housed in the same building. The enrollment at this time was 843 students. In 1913, the Superintendent of the Petersburg school system noted that there had been no improvement in the city's schools for its African American students over the last forty years and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 8 Page 9

called for vast improvements. He described the schools as "badly located, utterly lacking in ventilation, improperly heated, insufficiently lighted, unsanitary, overcrowded, and poorly equipped."¹⁷ The high school was not accredited due to a lack of a science laboratory.

In 1915, the School Board proposed that the high school and elementary schools be separated with the construction of two buildings to house each level. They purchased for this purpose the Bulifant property located on the southern edge of the Gillfield area which since the 1870s had been a largely African American community. The twin buildings of the Peabody-Williams School, located on Jones Street, opened in 1920. A twenty-five foot long arch connected the identical facades of the two buildings creating an imposing appearance. The building that housed the high school continued to use the name of the old school, Peabody, for the philanthropist George Peabody. The Williams Building, which became a junior high school (a concept introduced by the state in 1914) instead of an elementary school, was named for Henry Williams a noted minister of Gillfield Baptist Church. In 1923, the Federal Street Elementary School (later named the Giles B. Cooke Elementary School) was built one block to the rear (east) of the Peabody-Williams School thus creating a complex of educational buildings that included an elementary, junior high, and high school.

The Peabody Building, a two-story brick structure, consisted of four classrooms on each of the two main floors with additional rooms in the basement. In addition to the classrooms, it contained an auditorium, a library of 1,010 volumes, a science laboratory, and a homemaking suite. The Peabody Building opened in the fall of 1920 with ninety-seven students, four full-time teachers, a principal and assistant principal. It became a fully accredited four-year high school with the 1921-1922 session. By 1935, its enrollment stood at 409 students with forty-three teachers.¹⁸ In a resolution adopted by the Petersburg School Board upon the retirement of James Shields in 1935, it noted that Peabody High School was the first public high school for African Americans in the state.¹⁹

The size of the student body of the Peabody School continued to grow while new course offerings were added. In 1938, there were 461 students with thirty-six graduating that year. Of the graduates, twenty-one went on to college. That same year, the curriculum was expanded to include three courses of study; college preparatory, industrial and general. There were sixty-two graduates in 1939 and fifty-nine in 1940. At least half of each of these two graduating classes pursued a college degree.²⁰

By 1945, the facilities at Peabody were described as already inadequate and the Williams Building was overcrowded. There were no lunchroom facilities at either of the schools.²¹ In 1948, the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 8 Page 10

Petersburg School Board began planning for a new high school for African American students and began assembling land adjacent to the Peabody-Williams School. Construction commenced in 1950 and the last class graduated from the Peabody-Williams School in 1951. The new high school opened with the September 1951 school year. The new school was officially named Peabody High School continuing the tradition began in 1874.²² It served as the high school for African American students until the 1970-71 term when the Petersburg schools were integrated. The formerly white Petersburg High School became the only city high school and students who had formerly attended Peabody went to that school. Peabody became a junior high school and is now a middle school.

The old Peabody-Williams School continued to be used after the new Peabody High School opened. The old school was renamed the Henry Williams School. The Peabody Building housed grades four through seven to alleviate overcrowding in the Cooke Elementary (Federal Street) School located a block away and the Virginia Street School.²³ In 1965, the Williams Building was renovated as the Peabody Annex housing classrooms, science laboratories and language laboratories. Unfortunately, two years later the Williams Building was seriously damaged by fire and had to be demolished leaving the Peabody Building standing as a single building.

The Peabody-Williams Building was erected during a burst of school construction in the City of Petersburg and throughout the state. At the turn of the twentieth century, Progressive Era reformers sought to remake the public school as the center of the community with a wider influence than just providing an education for children. They envisioned every public school in Virginia as a "community center where the citizens may unite for the improvement of the educational, social, moral, physical, civic, and economic interests."²⁴ This movement to use schools as a catalyst for social change led to more control in the early twentieth century by the State Board of Education and diminished local power.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the state legislature passed several financial incentives for the construction of new schools that led to a boom in school construction. The value of school property in Virginia increased from \$8.5 to \$39 million between 1910 and 1923. With the disbursement of money for local schools, the state also began to exercise tighter control over the actual construction of school buildings and required all plans to be approved by local and state superintendents. The Strode Act included specifications on ventilation, lighting, design, and toilet facilities. By 1911, the Department of Public Instruction was supplying, without cost, plans and specifications for sixteen different school designs. By 1920, the newly established Division of School Building provided plans, advised on sites, wrote specifications for buildings, and supervised the construction.²⁵ This level of control raised the standards of design and construction throughout the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 8 Page 11

state.

It was during this period of progressive reform and activist state participation in education that many of Petersburg's schools were built. The same was true in other urban centers of the state such as Richmond. Many of Petersburg's schools, both black and white, were overcrowded and the city embarked on an ambitious building campaign. City schools built during this period include the Duncan M. Brown School at Wythe and Jefferson Streets in 1908, the A. P. Hill School on Halifax in 1910, the Robert E. Lee Elementary School on West Washington Street in 1911, the Petersburg High School in 1917, the Peabody-Williams School in 1920, the Federal Street Elementary (Giles B. Cooke) School in 1923, and the Anna Bolling Junior High School in 1926.

The Peabody-Williams School was designed by Charles M. Robinson. Robinson was one of the most important Virginia architects of this period and is most noted for his work in designing schools at all educational levels -- primary, secondary, and collegiate. Robinson (1867-1932) was born in Hamilton, in Loudoun County, Virginia, the son of architect James T. Robinson. He studied architecture under D. S. Hopkins of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and John K. Peebles, a Petersburg native.²⁶ Charles Robinson practiced architecture in Altoona and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania before moving to Richmond in 1906. From 1910 to 1929 he served as the supervising architect for the Board of Public Instruction in Richmond and is associated with the design of at least twenty-nine new schools or additions built in that city including Cary, Fox, and Ginter Park Elementary Schools, Albert Hill, Bainbridge, and Chandler Junior High Schools, and Thomas Jefferson High School.²⁷ In addition to his work for the City of Richmond, he designed primary and secondary schools for Hanover, Henrico, and Louisa counties and the cities of Portsmouth, Newport News, Norfolk, and Fredericksburg among others.

Robinson also was active in the design and campus layout at a number of state institutions of high learning. In 1908, he was employed to prepare a master plan for Madison College, one of the state's four normal colleges for women (now James Madison University). He created an elaborate Beaux Arts scheme that could be expanded in units without destroying the original plan.²⁸ He also designed a master plan for Radford University, which was abandoned after the first two buildings were constructed. He designed a number of individual buildings at Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, Virginia and Virginia State University in Ettrick across the Appomattox River from Petersburg. Perhaps his best-known collegiate work is the master plan for the College of William and Mary, which he designed in 1925. He also designed many of the buildings for that plan. Thought by many to be his most highly detailed collegiate work, the William and Mary campus and building

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetPeabody Building
Petersburg, Va.Section 8 Page 12

plan has been credited with popularizing the Georgian Revival style for educational, residential, commercial, and religious uses throughout the country.²⁹

In addition to his educational works, Robinson designed churches, hotels, department stores, including Richmond's well known Miller & Rhoads building, two Richmond hospitals, Stuart Circle and Grace, and a tobacco warehouse for R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. Although perhaps not as well known as his institutional accomplishments, he created residential designs for the burgeoning Richmond suburb of Ginter Park and in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Robinson is known to have designed six buildings in Petersburg, five schools and the Petersburg Hotel on Tabb Street. His earliest is a 1908 plan for an elementary school that may be the Duncan M. Brown School at Wythe and Jefferson streets (now administrative offices). He is also credited with the design of a second elementary school in 1910, perhaps the A.P. Hill School on Halifax Street. The architect's plans for the Peabody-Williams School have not been found; only the specifications. The undated specifications's cover sheet, from the office of Charles M. Robinson, Inc., is entitled "Petersburg Colored Schools, Building No. 1884, Work and Material to be Furnished in the Erection and Completion of Two Colored School Buildings known as the Colored High School, and Colored Elementary School for the School Board of the City of Petersburg, Petersburg, Virginia." Because the plans have not been located, it is not known if Robinson actually designed the twin buildings of the Peabody-Williams School to be linked or if the Petersburg authorities decided to connect them. There is no mention in the specifications of either the connecting arch or covered way.³⁰ Individually, the design of the Peabody and Williams buildings, like the Brown and Federal Street schools, was more typical of late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century schools than Robinson's later school designs. In contrast, the Bolling School, built in 1926, late in Robinson's career is more monumental in scale with a recognized national style that exemplified the increased importance of education.

It is interesting to note that the designs chosen for the African American schools built in Petersburg during this period contrast considerably with those chosen for the white schools. Both the Robert E. Lee Elementary School (1911) and the Petersburg High School (1917) (neither were Robinson designs), built as white schools, were on the leading edge of the movement towards larger, more architecturally sophisticated buildings for schools and their Neo-Classical-style exteriors are representative of this trend. In contrast, the designs chosen for the schools for black students three to nine years later (Peabody-Williams [1920], Giles B. Cooke [1923]) are more reminiscent of earlier school designs such as the Brown School (1908). Although the pairing of the Peabody and Williams

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 8 Page 13

buildings and their visual link via archway gave the school a more monumental appearance than the individual buildings, their style and plan harkened back to schools built in the previous decades rather than the Neo-classical façades of the white high school (1917) or the Robinson-designed Anna Bolling Junior High School built six years later in 1926. Actually, the Williams Building appears to have had the same plan as the Robert E. Lee Elementary School (1911) on Washington Street but the Lee School has a Neo-Classical façade with a visually commanding portico. Another example is the A.P. Hill School, built in 1910 for white elementary students, which features a one-story portico and festoon panels between the floors across the façade. Perhaps these choices of style and design are a reflection of the dual school system that operated in Petersburg and the rest of the South and the inherent "separate and unequal" nature of that system as was pointed out in the 1954 landmark Supreme Court ruling of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* that eventually ended the enforced segregation of schools.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 8 Page 14

¹ Lawrence L. Hartzell, "Glory Days: Petersburg in the Antebellum Era." Paper delivered at the Historic Petersburg Symposium, Petersburg, Va. 10 March 1990, p. 5.

² Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg, Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1984), p. 91, 93.

³ James G. Scott and Edward A. Wyatt, IV, *Petersburg's Story, A History*, (Petersburg: By the Authors, 1960), p. 264.

⁴ Rosy Rash, curator, "Petersburg Pupils, Education in the Cockade City," typescript of exhibit captions at Centre Hill Mansion, Petersburg Museums, Department of Tourism, Petersburg, Va., 1998.

⁵ Martha Short Dance, *Peabody High School, A History of the First Negro Public High School in Virginia*, (New York: By the Author, 1976), p. 16.

⁶ Rash.

⁷ Mary Ellen Bushey, Ann Creighton-Zollar, Lucious Edwards Jr., L. Daniel Mouer, and Robin L. Ryder, "African Americans in Petersburg," report prepared for the City of Petersburg, Department of Planning and Community Development, Petersburg, Va., 1994, p. 29.

⁸ William D. Henderson, *The Unredeemed City: Reconstruction in Petersburg, Virginia 1865-1874*, (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1977), p. 37.

⁹ Scott and Wyatt, p. 262.

¹⁰ Scott and Wyatt, p. 264.

¹¹ Lawrence L. Hartzell, "The Exploration of Freedom in Black Petersburg, Virginia, 1865-1902," Unpublished manuscript, 15 January 1990.

¹² Dance, p. 22-23.

¹³ Dance, p. 23.

¹⁴ Dance, p. 24.

¹⁵ Dance, p. 27.

¹⁶ Dance, p. 27.

¹⁷ Dance, p. 30.

¹⁸ Dance, p. 30-31.

¹⁹ Dance, p. 31.

²⁰ Dance, p. 35.

²¹ Lindley J. Stiles, Arthur M. Jarman, and B.J. Chandler, "Petersburg Survey Report," report submitted to the Board of Education, Petersburg, Va., 16 November 1954, p. 4a.

²² Dance, p. 37.

²³ Stiles, p. 14.

²⁴ J. L. Blaire Buck, *The Development of Public Schools in Virginia, 1607-1952*, (Richmond: Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Education, 1952), p. 257.

²⁵ Buck, p. 144.

²⁶ John Wells and Robert E. Dalton, *The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955, A Bibliographic Dictionary*, (Richmond: New South Architectural Press, 1977), p. 383.

²⁷ Paul L. Weaver, "Public Schools of Richmond, Virginia 1869-1930," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1992.

²⁸ Wells and Dalton, p. 377.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 8 Page 15

²⁹ Wells and Dalton, p. 378.

³⁰ Robinson, Charles M., "Specification for Work and Material to be Furnished in the Erection and Completion of Two colored School Buildings known as the Colored High School, and Colored Elementary School for the School Board of the City of Petersburg, Petersburg, Va.," typescript, Department of Facilities, City of Petersburg, Petersburg, Va., (nd).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 9 Page 16

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 9 Page 17

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Peabody Building
Petersburg, Va.

Section 10, Photo List Page 18

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for the Peabody Building of the Peabody-Williams School is shown as the heavy line on the accompanying site map entitled "Location of the Peabody Building of the Peabody-Williams School".

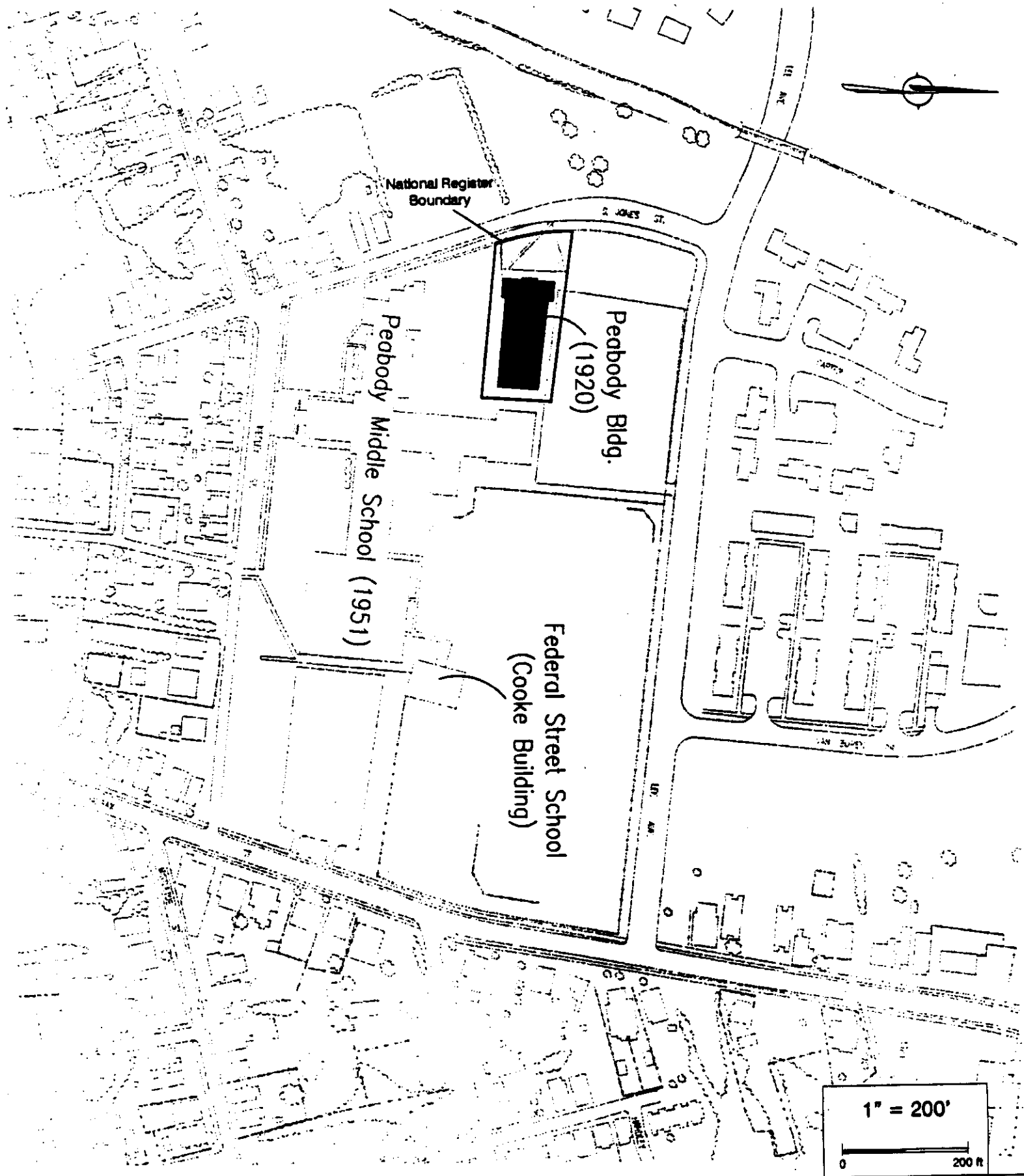
Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundary for the Peabody Building of the Peabody-Williams School encompasses only the surviving building of the Peabody-Williams School and not the new buildings immediately adjacent to it since they are at the end of the period of significance for this property. It was not thought necessary to include the adjacent paved parking lots. The land surrounding the school building historically would not have been used for that purpose.

Photograph List

These seven photographs of the Peabody Building of the Peabody-Williams School were taken by Ashley M. Neville, 8 March 2000. The original negatives are housed at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia.

1. Main (west) façade of the Peabody Building. View to the southeast. Neg. #18089
2. Detail of main entry on west façade. View to the east. Neg. #18089
3. Front stairs, ascending to main floor on right and descending to basement on left. View to the east. Neg. #18089
4. Partition wall for principal's office, second floor. View to the west. Neg. #18088
5. Second floor classroom showing chalkboards and door. View to the north. Neg. #18088
6. Second floor classroom showing closet wall. View to the west. Neg. #18088
7. Auditorium showing stage area. View to the northeast. Neg. #18089



Location of the Peabody Building
of the Peabody-Williams School

